

Area law enforcement officers complete CIT training

NAMI advocates are elated that it's really happening! The first class of Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) officers in Western North Carolina graduated on April 25 at A-B Tech. Fifteen officers and deputies from the Asheville Police Department and Buncombe County Sheriff's Office completed the 40-hour training. A second class of more than 20 officers

from these organizations graduated on May 23.

CIT educates officers who come into contact with people with severe mental illnesses on how to recognize the symptoms of those illnesses and respond effectively to people experiencing psychiatric crises. The program is designed to improve the safety of officers and mental health consumers and redirect consumers from the judicial system to the health care system.



James Pitts of the National Alliance on Mental Illness-Western Carolina Affiliate speaks on the importance of CIT for the community. Representatives of organizations that developed CIT for the area join him. From left are Bill Hogan, Asheville Police Chief; Terry Bellamy, Asheville Mayor; Carol Peterson, Buncombe County Commissioner and Chair of A-B Tech's Trustees, and Van Duncan, Buncombe County Sheriff.



Buncombe County Sheriff's Deputy Cynthia Douthit receives her CIT pin from Asheville Police Chief Bill Hogan during graduation ceremonies April 25 at A-B Tech.

"We need this because we're the ones on the street dealing with people," said Forrest Weaver, officer with the Asheville Police Department. "It's

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Legal issues to be discussed at June 17 meeting

Legal issues for individuals with disabilities and their families often can be problematic and confusing. One is whether to establish a Special Needs Trust that provides for the maintenance of an individual with a disability by complementing rather than replacing government benefits. Addressing this subject at the 7 p.m.

Tuesday, June 17, NAMI Western Carolina meeting at Mountainhouse will be Diana Johnston, an attorney with the Van Winkle Firm, who focuses her practice on serving families with special needs children.

Johnston is among only 10 Certified Elder Law Attorneys in North Caro-

lina and one of fewer than 400 in the nation. She also is a member of the by invitation-only Special Needs Alliance (SNA) www.specialneedsalliance.com. This national, non-profit organization is composed of about 100 attorneys committed to helping individuals with disabilities, their families, and

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NAMI Basics reaches out to parents and caregivers

Henderson County resident Donna Reilly is among the first group of 15 teachers trained April 4-6 to offer the new NAMI Basics Education Program in North Carolina. NAMI Basics, consisting of six 2-hour sessions, is for parents or caregivers of children/adolescents who showed symptoms of a mental illness before the age of 13, regardless of their current age. The course covers medication, the biology of mental illness, diagnoses, and treatment, and empowers its participants to effectively advocate for their children.

Jennifer Rothman, Young Families Program Director for NAMI North Carolina, said, "NAMI NC is thrilled to have this new

program. This is another outlet to reach the many families out there who don't know where to turn and need to know that they are not alone."

Upcoming NAMI Basics classes will be posted at www.naminc.org under Programs. Two additional North Carolinians will attend the Train the Trainer event in St. Louis on Oct. 16-18 in order to expand the program in NC. For information, contact Jennifer Rothman at 919-788-0801 or 800-451-9682 or jrothman@naminc.org.



Ground Zero to meet at Weaver Park

Details for the next get-together of the Ground Zero Social Club can be found at the GZ website <http://gzsosocialclub.org/> under the Events tab. The event page includes links for directions to event site and links to Asheville Bus routes.

Due to increased responsibilities at work I will no longer be able to personally make calls out to all members. The list of phone numbers is now beyond 32. Current members who would like to take a more active role and help out by making those calls should contact me at 398-0211 or by email at john@gzsosocialclub.org, and I will distribute a few numbers of other members who desire a personal contact for events.

Complete information for events are listed on the GZ website at least a week in advance of the event. Be sure and refresh your browser to make sure you have the latest information. – John Morrison

Legal

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the professionals who represent them. The SNA attorneys are skilled in the complex area of special needs trusts and wills; Medicaid, SSI, and other entitlement programs; tax planning, and other complex legal issues involving

individuals with disabilities. Members of SNA have proven credentials in the area of disability law and advocacy.

Peer-to-peer support groups for family members and consumers will follow this informative program. Mountainhouse is at 225 East Chestnut St., Asheville.

County opens new Crisis Stabilization Unit

At noon on June 6, 2008, the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners will officially open the new Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU) at 257 Biltmore Avenue in Asheville. In partnership with the Western Highlands Network, this 16 bed, 24 hour, 7 day a week crisis unit is the completion of an integral part of Buncombe County's efforts to address the needs of the mentally ill in crisis and reduce the escalating jail population.

Working in conjunction with the new Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) made up of officers from the Asheville Police Department and County Sheriff's Office who have completed training to recognize and respond to issues relating to mental illness, the CSU will provide an alternative to placing a citizen in the County Detention Center and provide a place where people can recover from an acute mental health crisis without being transported to the state hospital in Broughton.

The CSU will allow the patient to stay close to family and friends and perhaps their own therapist or support network and will allow the County to avoid the cost of transportation and in many cases detention.

In partnership with ARP Phoenix who will operate the CSU and Mission Hospitals who is developing a one-stop assessment center, the County estimates that this facility will significantly decrease the number of jail beds used by repeat crisis patients and give officers and patients a quicker route to recovery and success.

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NAMI Family-to-Family course provides free education for families of mentally ill

NAMI Family-to-Family, a free 12-week class for relatives and friends of individuals diagnosed with a severe mental illness, will be offered again in Asheville this fall. This will begin on Monday, August 25, from 6:30 to 9 p.m. NAMI Western Carolina sponsors the course, which provides up-to-date facts about schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, clinical depression, panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety disorder, and co-occurring addictions.

Trained family members teach the course, which balances education with self-care, emotional support, and empowerment. A clinical psychologist with an ill family member developed the curriculum, which has been presented to more than 100,000 people nationwide.



NAMI Family-to-Family also covers:

- Coping skills, handling a crisis and relapse.
- Listening and communication techniques.
- Problem solving, setting limits, rehabilitation.
- Understanding the experience of being mentally ill.
- Community services and resources.

- Advocacy, fighting discrimination and stigma.

Since the class size is limited, early registration is required. For information, call Jim and Sharon Pitts at 828-258-5359. Also call them if you would like to volunteer as a support person for the class. Recently they taught a class of 23 in Asheville.

Plans underway for Mars Hill class

For the first time, NAMI's acclaimed Family-to-Family course may be offered at Mars Hill beginning in August. (See accompanying article for class details.) If you are interested in enrolling, call 828-299-9596 or email rohaus@charter.net.



Volunteers needed!

Pitch in and help NAMI Western Carolina in its mission of advocacy, education and support. Don't let just a few carry all the weight. Volunteering is a great opportunity to get to know other members while getting involved. Or enlist a pal to come along and learn more about NAMI.

Volunteers presently needed for Bele Chere shuttle bus ticket sales table at the Asheville Mall AND the Celebration of Courage flower sales/info tables.

BELE CHERE - Friday, July 25 10:30 am - 9 pm
Saturday, July 26 8:30 am - 9 pm, and
Sunday, July 27 10:30 am - 4 pm
Two-hour shifts (or more) are available

CELEBRATION OF COURAGE
Wednesday, Sept. 10, Thurs. Sept. 11 Friday, Sept. 12
8:30 am - 6:30 pm. Shifts are
8:30 - Noon, Noon to 3:30 and 3:30 to 6:30.

Call Christine
Smith 258-1832
(Leave
message) or
email at
cijp1860@
yahoo.com.

CIT training

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going to be something that's going to help us down the road."

CIT is a community solution to a community issue. Since September 2006, a planning group of law enforcement officers, educators, government officials, advocates, consumers, the judiciary, and mental health providers has been meeting to bring CIT to Buncombe County. One year ago, eight local organizations signed a Memorandum of Agreement to work together, along with a host of community stakeholders, to develop CIT in our community. These partners are the Buncombe County Sheriff's Office, the Asheville Police Department, A-B Tech, Western Highlands Network, Mission Hospitals, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)-Western Carolina Affiliate, the City of Asheville, and Buncombe County.

NAMI Western Carolina Board member Mona Cornwell, director of communications at AB-Tech College, and Rich Munger, Ph.D., the planner/evaluator for Buncombe County Human Services Support Team, were instrumental in developing the com-

munity partnership and bringing it to our area. They co-chaired the initial CIT training in Buncombe County and continue to coordinate the program.

Several mental health professionals gave presentations about various mental health disorders during the 40-hour CIT training. They also volunteered to role-play scenarios to dramatize the de-escalation training.



De-escalation included specific strategies for consumers who are confused, disoriented, out of touch with reality, intoxicated, or contemplating suicide. Presenting family and consumer perspectives to the training were NAMI Western Caro-

lina members: Tracy Mixson, Florence Rowe, Jim and Judy Slautich, Christine Smith, Liz Smith, and Tracey Turner.

During one day of the training, officers visit area programs and speak with clients at the Crisis Stabilization Unit, Mountainhouse, Juvenile Detention Center, Copestone Psychiatric Unit, ABCC Women and Children's Shelter, VA Hospital, Alcohol Drug abuse Treatment Center, and A Hope Day Program.

"I see CIT as a much needed tool in our toolbox. It makes officers safer

and the community safer," said Buncombe County Sheriff Van Duncan. "My biggest fear is having a mentally ill person in jail when they need treatment."

Graduating officers were Roger Aly, Chad Bridges, Elizabeth Budd, Iris Durell, Don Eberhardt, Christopher Eby, Charles Fry Jr., Diana Loveland, and Forrest Weaver of the Asheville Police Department and Cynthia Douthit, Bobby Hoglen, Matthew Hutchinson, Darrell Maxwell, Darrell Saucier, and David Stevens of the Buncombe County Sheriff's Office.

What is CIT?

Crisis Intervention Training educates and prepares law enforcement officers who come into contact with people with severe mental illnesses on how to recognize the signs and symptoms of these illnesses and respond effectively and appropriately to people experiencing a psychiatric crisis. CIT is designed to improve officer and consumer safety and redirect consumers from the judicial system to the health care system.

Through CIT, select patrol officers receive 40 hours of training in such mental health issues as crisis intervention skills, community resources, diagnostic groups, and how to navigate the mental health system.

In addition to performing their regular patrol duties, CIT officers are dispatched to incidents that involve people experiencing psychiatric crises. These officers oversee the situation, help stabilize it, and assist with any negotiations. In some cases, the officers refer individuals to community resources or transport them for emergency commitment evaluations.

When did CIT begin?

The CIT program was formally established in Memphis in 1988, the year after

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Next Newsletter Deadline: July 25. Email info@namiwnc.org

Contact Numbers For Western Highland Network

Western Highlands Network, 356 Biltmore Ave., Asheville, NC 28801, www.western-highlands.org manages mental health, developmental disabilities and substance abuse services in Yancey, Transylvania, Rutherford, Polk, Mitchell, Madison, Henderson and Buncombe counties.

For routine needs or daytime emergency, call 828-225-2800 or 1-800-951-3792 (toll free).

For emergencies after hours & weekends, call 828-252-4357 or 1-800-951-3792.

CIT training

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that city's police department responded to a crisis call involving a young man who was reported to be mentally ill, armed with a knife, and threatening neighbors and family members. After a brief standoff, officers shot and killed the man, prompting an outcry from the community. Even before the fatal incident, NAMI Western Carolina alleged that officers were insufficiently trained and unprepared to respond to calls involving people with mental illness. After the shooting, the Mayor formed a community task force to study the issue and develop a plan.

Why is CIT needed?

One in five people has a diagnosable mental illness each year—44 million adults and 13.7 million children. Of those, fewer than half of the adults and only one-third of the children get help. Untreated mental illness increases the risk to law enforcement officers who respond to crisis situations.

Between 25 and 40 percent of all Americans with mental illness will pass through the criminal justice system at some point. A recent study by the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics documented that nationally an estimated 56 percent of state prison inmates and 64 percent of local jail inmates have mental health problems.

Research shows people with mental illness are:

- More likely to be arrested following encounters with police (47 percent vs. 26 percent, according to one study).
- Face more serious charges than others for similar behavior.
- Receive stiffer sentences than people with similar crimes.
- Often don't get treatment (60 percent of those with severe mental illness in jail don't get

treatment, according to a U.S. Justice Department study).

What results has CIT produced?

When law enforcement responds to calls about people with mental illness, the arrest rate is 20 percent if no specialized response such as CIT exists. The arrest rate for the Memphis CIT program is only 2 percent. Twenty-three percent of the incidents are

resolved on the scene, and 75 percent result in the person being transported to a crisis unit.

States where CIT has been implemented also have found:

- Officer injury rates are reduced.
- Criminal recidivism by mental health consumers is reduced.
- The relationships between law enforcement and mental health care providers are improved.

Crisis unit

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The CSU will serve the eight county Western Highlands Network LME area including Buncombe, Henderson, Madison, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Transylvania and Yancey counties.

"The opening of this unit is a perfect example of how utilizing smart partnerships within our community can address a long-standing need" said Mandy Stone, Assistant County Manager and Human Services Director, saying that redirecting consumers from the judicial system to treatment is a key piece of that plan.

Join NAMI or Renew Your Membership

I would like to be a member of NAMI-WC and am enclosing my check for membership and/or contribution.

Please check if: ☐ new or ☐ renewal:

- ☐ \$35.00 One-year Membership (Individual and Family)
☐ \$3.00 Open Door Membership for those with limited means

\$ _____ Additional Contribution

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Home Telephone _____

E-Mail _____

Mail checks payable to NAMI WC:, P.O. Box 8046, Asheville, NC 28814

NAMI Western Carolina is a 501(c)3 non profit corporation. All contributions are tax-deductible.

P.O. Box 8046
Asheville, NC 28814

Return Service Requested

Non-Profit Organization
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Asheville, NC

Support

NAMI WESTERN CAROLINA offers support, education and advocacy to families, friends and to all persons with a biological brain disorder/mental illness. NAMI WC monthly membership meetings are at 9:30 a.m. the 1st Saturday and 7 p.m. the 3rd Tuesday. (Use the side entrance.) Meetings are open to all and include support groups.

SUPPORT, GENERAL INFORMATION: Mary Lane
Travis: 298-1847, olg77tr@bellsouth.net

SUPPORT GROUPS: Support meetings for all are held following the general meeting at 9:30 a.m. the first Saturday of the month and following the 7 p.m. program on the third Tuesday of the month. All NAMI WC support groups offer peer-to-peer support; they are not led by mental health professionals.

MAGNETIC MINDS, Bipolar Disorder Support Group: Consumer support group only for people with a bipolar disorder diagnosis; meets at 7 p.m. the 1st & 3rd Wednesday monthly. Info: www.magneticminds.org. Co-facilitators: Betty Hall, b.i.hall@charter.net; Tracy Mixson, 232-0438.

NAMI-CARE: Support group by consumers, for consumers and about consumers meets at 10 a.m. the first Saturday monthly. NAMI-CARE stands for Consumers Advocating Recovery Through Empowerment. NAMI-CARE FACILITATOR: Marlene Wooten, 505-0438, marlenas333@charter.net.



EDUCATION AND OUTREACH: NAMI WC offers free educational programs and participates in a variety of health fairs, anti-stigma campaigns and mental illness awareness events. To request a speaker or the affiliate's participation, contact Jim Pitts, 258-5359, jimpitts1@mac.com.

NAMI FAMILY-TO-FAMILY EDUCATION: An empowering 12-week course of up-to-date facts and support for families and friends of persons with a diagnosed mental illness. Trained family members teach the 2 1/2 hour classes. The course is free with all materials provided. Classes fill up quickly and the class size is limited. For information on the next class to be offered in Asheville, call 299-9596 or email rohaus@charter.net.

IN OUR OWN VOICE: LIVING WITH MENTAL ILLNESS: People with mental illnesses tell their stories about learning to cope with the reality of their disorders while recovering and reclaiming productive lives in this brief, yet comprehensive, interactive presentation. IOOV includes video, personal testimony and discussion. IOOV PROGRAM COORDINATOR: Tracy Mixson, 232-0438, namiwc.voice@charter.net. Far West Counties: 524-1355; South West Counties: 884-6103.

NAMI NORTH CAROLINA HELPLINE: 1-800-451-9682

All meetings are held at Mountainhouse, 225 E. Chestnut Street, Asheville, unless otherwise indicated.